

has had a whip-smart right-hand man. I won't be able to top his boss's wonderful tribute remarks from yesterday, so I won't even try, but I did just want to add my own brief thanks and congratulations.

I have gotten to see Nick's great work up close. Senator THUNE and I have a standing Monday meeting to plan the week. It is a very small meeting with very few staff. Nick has been in that room, and, every time, I have been glad he was. It is a rare thing in Washington to meet someone who is probably almost one of the smartest people in the room but who also never lets you know it, but Nick combines brilliance and humility in just that way.

So my staff and I join Senator THUNE and the whole Senate in bidding Nick a fond, if reluctant, farewell.

Thank you, sincerely, for your fine, fine service.

TRIBUTE TO ANDREW FERGUSON

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on one final matter, when you have served in the Senate as long as I have, you get to hire and work with a lot of talented people, and when you find rock stars, you try to hang onto them. As a result, when a key staff member moves on, it often means reflecting on an extended Senate career of many years, including shared memories of old war stories going back ages.

Andrew Ferguson is a different case.

It was only 2 years ago that I hired Andrew to be my chief counsel. He has only been in the Senate about 3 years. By the standards of this place, he is a spring chicken. But it has only taken Andrew this short time to leave a stunningly outsized imprint on my work, on our conference, on the judiciary, and on everyone who has gotten to work alongside of him as well.

So, a few days before Andrew concludes his Senate service, I am both happy for the opportunity to share how this happened and really, really sorry that I have to do it.

The chief counsel in my leadership office handles a portfolio that is almost comically large: judicial confirmations, law enforcement and crime, immigration and border security, some constitutional questions that intersect with the separation of powers, others that intersect with national security, sometimes arcane Senate history. It takes a lawyer's lawyer with expertise in our laws and Constitution and someone who can feel out the politics, the personalities, and the shades of gray that drive a political body.

One look at Andrew's resume told me that qualification No. 1 was, clearly, no problem—UVA Law; clerked on the DC Circuit; clerked for Justice Thomas; experience in the private sector—a lawyer anybody would be glad to hire.

Oh, but what about the second qualification?

Like I said, Andrew wasn't a long-serving Senate hand. He arrived at Ju-

diciary in time to help Chairman GRASSLEY notch a win for the country and the sanity of the Senate with the confirmation of Justice Kavanaugh. He had only just been promoted to Chairman GRAHAM's top nominations counsel when I poached him.

Well, Andrew stepped into this complex role, and, boy, did he flourish.

He became a go-to leader for committees and offices across the Republican side, a key Senate liaison to both the executive and judicial branches. He added to his lawyerly chops and grew into a strategic adviser of the first-rate. Our Republican conference is a big tent with a range of visions, but Senators from across the conference have come not just to trust Andrew's judgment, but they seek it out.

Andrew's impact has been truly dramatic. I do not believe any other Senate staffer played a more crucial role in the last two Supreme Court confirmations combined. He was our side's field general in confirming Justice Barrett. Our majority spent 4 years rebuilding the kind of Federal judiciary that our constitutional order requires. Andrew played an indispensable part.

The last couple of years have brought all sorts of unusual national challenges. The 2 years that Andrew has spent with us feel more like 10. We faced scenarios that would have sounded like wild law school hypotheticals. Who would have guessed we would be fighting to protect Americans' religious freedom while the government battled an airborne virus? But our chief counsel invariably brought us up to speed on whatever the day would bring with a good head, a big heart, and great humor. And if the topic was new to him, a big stack of library books were on his desk.

It might sound like Andrew was just very dedicated to his job. That is not totally unusual. But that doesn't fully capture it. See, I have come to believe he is simply this intense about absolutely everything. Andrew takes work very seriously, but he also takes his faith seriously, and he takes family seriously. He treasures the upbringing that his parents, Roy and Susan, provided for him and his two brothers. He takes his interests seriously, his hobbies. There is an intense, infectious enthusiasm for all of it, a kind of good-natured aggression.

Now, as his colleagues will attest, all this intensity can yield, actually, entertaining results. If, for example, you took a stroll by Andrew's desk, you would often hear him shouting—shouting—excitedly at a colleague, but you would generally genuinely have no clue whether he is strongly disagreeing with the person or just agreeing with them with great gusto. He could be discussing the law, but it might also be Roman history or the Protestant Reformation or the merits of some TV comedy or his weekend plans involving the lawful exercise of his Second Amendment rights. Whatever the subject, you would get maximum enthu-

siasm, maximum force of nature, and everybody in earshot usually learns some new fact and shares a big laugh.

Different people enjoy this line of work for different reasons, but for Andrew, I think politics and policy matter so much because ideas and principles matter so much. That is why one of the most darkly funny and cynical people on our team has also been one of the most earnest and idealistic. Everything is worth thinking through. Everything is worth taking seriously because principles matter, the rule of law matters, and our country matters. That is why we come to work every day.

A lot of people first come to Washington with a warrior mentality, but the rhythms of this city sometimes lull folks into a somewhat calmer mixture. But, believe me, as I suspect the entire Senate can attest by now, we need not worry that Andrew Ferguson will be lulled into a calmer anything.

So, my friend, you may be leaving the trenches for now, but we both know there is no chance you will be able to stay away forever. You are going to miss the good fight, and I can say with personal certainty that the fight is going to miss you as well. Thank you for the law lectures. Thank you for the laughs. Thank you for an outstanding job for our country. Job well done.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

INVESTING IN A NEW VISION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION IN AMERICA ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3684, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3684) to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer (for Sinema) amendment No. 2137, in the nature of a substitute.

Carper-Capito amendment No. 2131 (to amendment No. 2137), to strike a definition.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

NOMINATION OF EUNICE C. LEE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this week the Senate will vote on Eunice Lee's nomination to serve on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. If confirmed, Ms. Lee would be the only—the only Black woman—and the only former public defender to serve on the Second Circuit. With her nomination, the Biden administration and Senate Democrats are continuing our efforts